(b) The present installed coach building capacities of the factories under the Ministry of Railways are as follows:

ICF	-	1000 coaches per annum.
RCF	-	1000 coaches per annum.

(c) No, Sir. Both ICF and RCF have their own design centres, supplemented by a dedicated Research and Design facility at RDSO (Research, Design and Standards Organisation), Lucknow with personnel having expertise and knowledge in this field.

(d) Does not arise.

Loco running staff

†738. SHRI SHREEGOPAL VYAS: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the loco running staff has to work 12-14 hours daily and as a result of which the incidents of physical and mental tension among them are coming to light;

(b) whether the number of other essential staff is also being reduced;

(c) whether this is adversely affecting the maintenance work; and

(d) the reaction of the Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHIR R. VELU): (a) The working hours of loco running staff have been fixed as 104 hours in a two weekly period of 14 days including preparatory and complementary work. As per extant instructions, running duty at a stretch should not ordinarily exceed 10 hours from departure of the train and overall duty should not exceed 12 hours from signing on to signing off. Only in exceptional exigencies like accidents, floods, agitation, equipment failures etc. they have to work beyond duty hours stipulated in the rules. This may in some cases, result in longer hours of duty but all efforts are made to contain the duty hours within the parameters laid down and the position is constantly monitored at all levels.

(b) to (d) No, Sir. The strength of essential safety category staff is continuously reviewed to ensure that safety and reliability of train operations is not compromised.

Electrification of Kanyakumari - Thiruvananthapuram rail line

739. SHRI K.E. ISMAIL: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Railways is considering a proposal for electrification of the 78 kilometre section between Kanyakumari and Thiruvananthapuram under Southern Railway; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and sanction made, if any, in the railway budget 2007-08 for the purpose?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.